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**For immediate release:**

## **CELEBRATION TO MARK COMPLETION OF FIRST PHASE OF POPE PARK MASTER PLAN**

*New entry way and pedestrian path improvements  
are the first elements of \$13.6 restoration plan*

(Hartford, CT – June 6, 2006) – On Saturday, June 17 from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m., community leaders, neighborhood residents, the Friends of Pope Park and members of the Pope family will gather to celebrate the completion of Phase One of the Pope Park Master Plan. The free event will take place in the park at the site of the new entry way near the intersection of Park Street and Park Terrace. The celebration is open to the public and will take place rain or shine. The event is sponsored by the Friends of Pope Park, The Pope Hartford Designated Fund and the City of Hartford.

The event will begin at 2:00 p.m. with **refreshments** by La Paloma Sabanera Coffee, **Flamenco and Rumba music** by Fuego Del Corazon (Fire from the Heart), and a **demonstration of old-fashioned high-wheeled bicycles** by the Connecticut Wheelmen, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the restoration and riding of early cycles.

A **ribbon cutting ceremony** will take place at approximately 2:15 p.m. with remarks from neighborhood and business leaders including Hartford Mayor Eddie Perez, State Representative Minnie Gonzalez and the Pope family. Following the ribbon-cutting ceremony, participants will march in a **Parade on Wheels** to inaugurate the new pathway system. The impromptu parade will be led by the Connecticut Wheelmen and the public is invited to participate with their own roller-skates, bicycles, strollers, wagons or wheelchairs.

The event will conclude with a **tree-planting ceremony** that will take place at the site of the new entry way. The tree, a Flowering Dogwood, is being donated by the Spanish American Merchants Association (SAMA) and will be planted by representatives from SAMA and Knox Parks Foundation.

Pope Park was donated to the city of Hartford in 1895 by Colonel Albert Pope for his employees and city residents to enjoy games, walking and out-of-door activities. Colonel Pope was the head of the Pope Manufacturing Company, which manufactured bicycles and automobiles, including the well-known Columbia bicycle. Pope Park was designed by the Olmsted firm as an example of the best that a park can contribute to the neighborhood. Unfortunately, the last half century has seen a gradual decline of this valuable neighborhood resource. Preserving and restoring the park is an essential component to the area's revitalization.

The June 17 event celebrates the completion of the first in a series of planned improvements to revitalize and restore the 75-acre Pope Park, as outlined in the \$13.6 million Pope Park Master Plan commissioned by the Friends of Pope Park, the Pope Hartford Designated Fund and Knox Parks Foundation in 2000. Phase One improvements were made possible by a \$150,000 grant from the City of Hartford and \$400,000 from

the State of Connecticut. Phase One consists of a new gateway to the park at the corner of Park Street and Park Terrace, 2,400 linear feet of new pedestrian pathways that also include handicapped access, benches and more than 200 shrubs and trees. Phase Two, planned for the fall of 2006, will involve removing Pope Park Drive to reclaim the original park land, construction of a new parking lot to serve the Recreation Center and ball fields, and a new plaza area at the Recreation Center main entrance.

The Pope Park Master Plan makes specific recommendations for Pope Park to help achieve the city's vision to improve all thirty-two of its parks as outlined in the Hartford Parks Master Plan of 1992. For more information about the Pope Park Master Plan, visit [www.popepark.org](http://www.popepark.org). For information about the Connecticut Wheelmen, visit [www.thewheelmen.org](http://www.thewheelmen.org).